

**Montana Department
of
Fish, Wildlife & Parks**



October 30, 2000

Enclosed are copies of the Environmental Assessment and Management Plan. For the proposed wildlife habitat purchase known as Garrity Mtn/Clear Creek acquisition. Your comments would be appreciated. This is part of a 30-day public comment period during which a public hearing will be held in Anaconda. Copies of these documents have been seen to various interest groups, government agencies, adjacent landowners, and interested individuals.

Comment Period - Nov 1 through Nov 30.

Public Hearing - Metcalf Center
Anaconda, Mt.
Nov 16, 2000
7:00 PM.

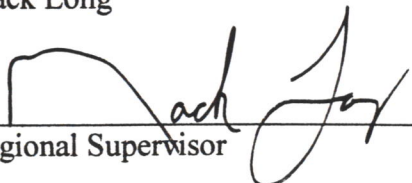
Send written comments to Contact Person -

Dept FWP
3201 Spurgin Rd.
Missoula, Mt. 59801

Dan Hook, Biologist
13 Mtn View
Anaconda, Mt 59711
563-5612
dhookfwp@aol.com

Written and recorded statements at the public hearing will be incorporated in the document and present to the Fish Wildlife and Parks Commission for their review and consideration in this proposal.

Mack Long


Regional Supervisor

10/30/00
8

GARRITY MTN./CLEAR CREEK ACQUISITION



- ENVIRONMENTAL
ASSESSMENT
- DRAFT MANAGEMENT
PLAN

**Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
Wildlife Division**

**Revised Draft October 20, 2000
Environmental Assessment**

**GARRITY MTN/CLEAR CREEK
PROPOSED WMA'S**

I. Introduction

The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation has negotiated a phased purchase agreement with YT Timber Co. to acquire approximately 32,528 acres for \$20,000,000. The RMEF has applied for a funding grant from the Upper Clark Basin Restoration Fund for \$6,075,000 to acquire approximately 9,000 acres on Garrity Mountain and the Clear Creek drainage. RMEF would transfer title to the Dept. Fish, Wildlife and Parks who would own and administer these lands. The US Forest Service through Land and Water Conservation Funding by the federal government would acquire the remaining property.

The purpose of this document is to comply with the requirements of the Montana Environmental Policy Act by preparing an Environmental Assessment on the proposed acquisition by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks of approximately 9,000 acres of land on Garrity Mtn. and the Clear Creek drainage near Anaconda, Deerlodge County.

II. Authority and Direction

Under the proposed action, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) would acquire 9,000 acres of land on Garrity Mountain and in the Clear Creek drainage for the purpose of establishing a wildlife management area. The establishment of a wildlife management area would further FWP's responsibility under ~~has~~ 87-1-201, MCA to protect, enhance, and regulate the use of Montana's fish and wildlife resources for public benefit now and in the future. The legal authority for FWP to acquire an interest in land is provided by 87-1-209 and 87-1-301, MCA. These statutes require the FWP Commission to approve the acquisition of all interest in land by the department, and in this case, due to the size and value of the proposal, the State Land Board must give final approval of the acquisition.

III. Location of Project

Table 1: attached
Figure 1: attached

IV. Description of Proposed Action

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks proposes to acquire in fee title all or a portion of approximately 6705 acres on Garrity Mountain and 2264 acres in the Clear Creek drainage in Anaconda-Deer Lodge County. The Garrity Mountain parcel would be managed by FWP as a wildlife management area and the Clear Creek parcel would be maintained in its current condition.

The proposed action is contingent upon the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF) receiving a grant from the Upper Clark Fork Basin Restoration Fund to fund the acquisition by FWP. FWP is not providing funding for this project. RMEF submitted a grant application for \$6,075,000 to pay for the approximately 9000 acres to be acquired by FWP. In its initial review of the grant application, the Upper Clark Fork River Basin Trustee Restoration Council has proposed to fund only \$3.7 million of the \$6,075,000 request. A final decision on the funding will be made in December, 2000 by the Upper Clark Fork Basin Trustee Restoration Council and Governor Racicot.

If the Upper Clark Fork Basin Restoration Fund approves only \$3.7 million funding, then FWP proposes to complete an initial phase of the project by acquiring a portion of the 9000 acres that comprise the entire proposal. In this event, FWP would continue to work with RMEF, the Natural Resource Damage Program and others to secure the additional third-party funding necessary to fully complete the proposed acquisition. No funding from FWP is available to complete this transaction.

The Department's proposed action is a component of a larger project developed by the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation. The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation has negotiated a phased purchase agreement with YT Timber Co. to acquire approximately 32,528 acres for \$20,000,000. The US Forest Service through LWCF funding by the federal would acquire the remaining 23,528 acres, not acquired by FWP.

Pursuant to the agreement negotiated by RMEF, YT Timber Co. retains a timber reservation on the Garrity Mountain parcel to be acquired by FWP. Under the agreement, YT Timber Co. has until December 31, 2006 to complete the harvest of 5 MBF on Garrity Mountain, and an additional two years to complete normal and usual timber harvest clean up.

As a result of this agreement, it is likely that timber harvesting by YT Timber Co. will occur on lands acquired by FWP for up to a 6-year period following FWP's acquisition of land. Some timber harvest may occur prior to FWP's acquisition.

The "state action" being taken by FWP that triggers MEPA review is the decision to acquire the land. Because timber harvest which will affect the condition of the land acquired and managed by FWP is included in that agreement, the department will evaluate the impacts of the proposed timber harvesting in this environmental review. No future "state action" is anticipated related to timber harvesting which would trigger further review under MEPA.

V. Purpose and Need For The Purposed Action

The lands acquired by the State of Montana would provide critical winter range for elk, mule deer, bighorn sheep, moose, and whitetail deer. They would provide seasonal and year-round habitat for a variety of other game and non-game species. They would provide seasonal public recreational use for the human population. They would provide important watershed values for the city of Anaconda. The purpose of the proposed action is to put 9,000 acres of land into public ownership to provide critical wildlife habitat and human recreational values.

V. Name, Address and Phone Number of Project Sponsor (if other than the agency)

Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
Box 8249
Missoula, Montana 59807-8249

Natural Resource Damage Program
1301 East Lockett
Box 201425
Helena, Montana 59620-1425

VI. Listing of any other Local, State or Federal agency that has overlapping or additional jurisdiction.

Acquisition by FWP would be funded through the Natural Resource Damage Program. Additional lands would be acquired by the US Forest Service through Land and Water Conservation Funds based on the same purchase agreement.

Funding: State share.

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Funding Amount</u>
Natural Resource Damage Program	\$6,075,000

Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities:

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Type of Responsibility</u>
Natural Resource Damage Program	Funding

VII Description of Reasonable Alternatives To the Proposed Action

1. No Action Alternative

The "No Action" alternative would result in the RMEF "possibly" pursuing several options. It may result in the purchase agreement with YT Timber being canceled. This could result in YT Timber Co. selling the property to other private interests for recreational, residential or other commercial purposes. This result could threaten the critical wildlife winter range values and restrict or eliminate public recreational use. The RMEF "may" assume the financial obligations in the purchase agreement and pursue additional LWCF funding with the US Forest Service. This funding source is still in doubt in Congress.

2. Alternatives Considered but Dropped from Further Evaluation

Several alternatives were considered by the department but dropped from further evaluation because they could not be implemented. If initiating this project on its own, the department would have considered a conservation easement or leasing as alternatives to fee title acquisition. FWP was not a party to the agreement between RMEF and YT Timber Co., but apparently these alternatives were not acceptable to YT Timber Co. The department also considered the alternatives of acquiring only the Garrity Mountain parcel, or of placing additional conditions upon the department's acquisition. Neither of these were acceptable to RMEF nor YT Timber Co, according to the RMEF.

VII. Evaluation Of Impacts On The Physical Environment

The proposed acquisition involves two parcels of land. The Garrity Mtn. parcel contains 6705 acres. The Clear Creek parcel is 2264 acres. The proposed actions by YT Timber Co. for these two parcels are different. YT Timber Co. will harvest approximately 5 million board feet of timber and construct 16.6 miles of roads on the Garrity Mtn. parcel (Table 2, appendix). The Clear Creek parcel will not experience any appreciable change in land use. For that reason the evaluation of impacts will be done separately.

1. Land Resources

Clear Creek:

Impact of Proposed Action: No negative impact would occur as a result of this proposal. The proposal would ensure that the productivity and nature of the land would be maintained.

No Action Alternative: The property may be sold for residential or recreational purposes. Sale of the property for private residential or recreational development would exclude public use of the area and may impact watershed values.

Garrity Mtn:

Impact of Proposed Action: The proposed action would result in the commercial removal of 5 MBF of timber from the property and construction of 16.6 miles of roads. At the conclusion of timber harvesting, administration and management of the property would be under the FWP as a Wildlife Management Area.

Management of the property would change from commercial timberland to an emphasis on big game winter range and public recreation. Natural forest succession would occur with timber regeneration of harvested areas. A road management plan would be developed under the Dept.'s WMA Management Plan and unused roads would be reseeded at the conclusion of commercial harvesting and allowed to recover.

No Action Alternative: YT Timber Co. will still harvest 5 MBF or more of timber and construct 16.6 miles of roads. The property may be sold for commercial, residential or recreational purposes. Sale of the property for private commercial, residential or recreational development may exclude public use of the area and impact critical winter range and watershed values.

2. Air Resources**Clear Creek:**

Impact of Proposed Action: There would be no impact.

No Action Alternative: There would be no impact.

Garrity Mtn:

Impact of Proposed Action: There would be no impact.

No Action Alternative: There would be no impact.

3. Water Resources**Clear Creek:**

Impact of Proposed Action: There would be no impact. Watershed values would be maintained.

No Action Alternative: If the property was sold for residential or private recreational development impacts to the watershed may occur. Residential or commercial sewage drain fields resulting in increased nutrient loads could impact the small mountain lakes in Clear Creek.

Garrity Mtn:

Impact of Proposed Action: The harvesting of 5 MBF of timber and the construction of 16.6 miles of roads has the potential to increase erosion and impact water quality and quantity. Impacts to Baker Creek and Big Gulch from increased sedimentation may occur. The removal of 5 MBF of timber has the potential to impact the timing and duration of spring runoff due to the removal of forest canopy. Under the terms of the options agreement between the RMEF and YT Timber, YT Timber is required to: 1) meet all applicable laws and regulations governing harvest operations, which primarily include water quality laws and rules and the Montana Stream Side Zone Management Act; 2) comply with the State's voluntary best management practices for forestry; 3) emulate previously employed harvest methods considered acceptable by state and federal forestry officials; and 4) meet specific road construction standards. The timber policy offers the opportunity for the RMEF, USFS and MFWP to monitor harvest methods. It is understood that once the State acquires the property it would succeed to the rights of the RMEF to enforce the timber harvest provisions. The applicable rules, laws and additional restrictions in the timber harvest policy are intended to prevent significant impacts to surface waters and fisheries. These restrictions are designed to reduce excessive runoff and sedimentation and maintain shade in the riparian areas. Once under state management the property would recover by natural forest regeneration and plant succession. The WMA Management Plan would address issues such as reseeding roadways and creek crossings to reduce erosion.

Garrity Mtn:

No Action Alternative: This alternative would release YT Timber from the options agreement timber harvest terms. They would have to comply with applicable state laws but not the voluntary restrictions in the agreement. This could result in greater impacts to water quality and quantity. Impacts to Baker Creek and Big Gulch from increased sedimentation would more likely occur. The removal of 5 MBF of timber would still potentially impact the timing and duration of spring runoff due to the removal of forest canopy.

4. Vegetation

Clear Creek:

Impact of Proposed Action: The proposed action would result in no impact to the current vegetative communities. They would be maintained in an undisturbed state.

No Action Alternative: If the property was sold for residential or private recreational development impacts to the vegetation may occur. The type and extent of development would determine these impacts.

Garrity Mtn:

Impact of Proposed Action: The removal of 5 MBF of timber from the property will impact the vegetative communities being harvested. The majority of timber harvest will occur in Lodgepole pine communities. The proposed methods include commercial thinning, overstory removal, and clearcuts with islands and pocket clearcutting of small areas (appendix). These stands will regenerate over time back to lodgepole stands. The Anaconda Co. for smelter related use harvested the property at the turn of the century. The timber stands represent approximately 80-90 year old regeneration. The native grasslands on the property, which provide the critical big game winter range, are in excellent condition. Acquisition of this property will guarantee their continued protection and management as winter range for elk, bighorn sheep and mule deer. The construction of 16.6 miles of roads will provide the opportunity for an increase in noxious weeds along the roadbeds and road cuts. YT Timber will broadcast seed the roadways at the completion of their harvest activities on a one-time basis. The MFWP Management Plan will address weed control and native vegetation reseeding as necessary along roadways and other disturbed sites.

No Action Alternative: The impacts due to timber harvest will be the same. Depending on the direction of future use and ownership, timber harvest activities could continue or intensify. Overgrazing, recreational development or residential use could negatively impact native grasslands.

5. Fish/Wildlife

Clear Creek:

Impact of Proposed Action: This action would result in a positive impact. The property will continue to provide valuable habitat for a variety of species. No adverse effects are expected on the diversity or abundance of game species, non-game species or threatened and endangered species. There would be no introduction of non-native species in the area.

No Action Alternative: If the property were subdivided there could be significant impacts. The physical loss of habitat could be significant but the increase in human activity and resulting disturbance and displacement of animals could have greater consequences.

Garrity Mtn:

Impact of Proposed Action: This action would result in a positive long-term impact. The area would be administered as a Wildlife Management Area with the emphasis on maintaining and enhancing critical big game winter range. The property supports a growing wintering elk population of 145 head observed in 2000 (50 head in 1988). Since 1991, the bighorn sheep herd to the north has been increasing their seasonal and year-round use of the area where today 30+ head are frequently observed. It provides critical winter range for mule deer and whitetail deer as well as habitat for moose, black bears and lions. This property as part of the overall Watershed Land Acquisition would help preserve an expansive, continuous forested habitat between the Flint and Pintlar mountain ranges for the movement of sheep, moose, wolverine and lynx. The acquisition would aid in the long-term maintenance and enhancement of native trout habitat for westslope cutthroat trout and bull trout.

The harvesting of 5 MBF of timber and the construction of 16.6 miles of roads will impact wildlife values on the property until forest regeneration occurs. Generally, species dependent on mature forest habitats will be negatively impacted. Species dependent on more open habitats such as mule deer may benefit from the opening of the forest canopy and increased shrub production. Timber harvest and road construction will have short-term impacts on elk security and thermal cover values on lands adjacent to the winter range. The Dept. FWP will need to address road closures in its Management Plan to deal with lost security values until forest regeneration occurs.

No Action Alternative: If the property were subdivided there could be significant impacts. The physical loss of habitat could be significant but the increase in human activity and resulting disturbance and displacement of animals could have greater consequences. The introduction of livestock grazing could result in increased competition for available forage and declining vegetation condition of the critical winter range.

VIII. Evaluation Of Impacts On The Human Environment

1. Noise/Electrical Effects

Clear Creek:

Impact of Proposed Action: There would be no impact.

No Action Alternative: This would allow for more possibilities for increased noise levels and electrical transmissions with an increase in human activity.

Garrity Mtn:

Impact of Proposed Action: There would be no impact.

No Action Alternative: This would allow for more possibilities for increased noise levels and electrical transmissions with an increase in human activity.

2. Land Use

Clear Creek:

Impact of Proposed Action: No impact. The proposed action would not change the current human use of the property. There may be a minor increase in recreational use, which would be by foot.

No Action Alternative: Changes could occur in land use practices, habitat quality, current wildlife use and numbers and public recreational opportunity if the property were sold for private residential or recreational use.

Garrity Mtn:

Impact of Proposed Action: The proposed action would change land use from private commercial timberland to a state owned Wildlife Management Area. The land management emphasis would change from commercial timber harvest to wildlife habitat and public recreation.

No Action Alternative: Changes could occur in land use practices, habitat quality, current wildlife use and numbers and public recreational opportunity if the property were sold for private residential or recreational use.

3. Risk/Health Hazards

Clear Creek:

Impact of Proposed Action: There would be no impact.

No Action Alternative: There would be no impact.

Garrity Mtn:

Impact of Proposed Action: There would be no impact.

No Action Alternative: There would be no impact.

4. Community Impacts

Clear Creek:

Impact of Proposed Action: There would be no anticipated negative impacts to the community. The scenic values and open nature of the property would be maintained and enjoyed by the community in perpetuity. Public access and recreational use of the property would be protected.

No Action Alternative: This alternative could result in loss of open lands.

Garrity Mtn:

Impact of Proposed Action: There would be no anticipated negative impacts to the community. The scenic values and open nature of the property would be maintained and enjoyed by the community in perpetuity. Public access and recreational use of the property would be protected and guaranteed through public ownership. Employment opportunities in the timber industry would be maintained during the course of the timber harvest.

No Action Alternative: This alternative could result in loss of open lands.

5. Public Services/Taxes/Utilities

Clear Creek:

Impact of Proposed Action: The proposed action would not affect local or state tax bases or revenues, nor existing utility systems and energy consumption. The FWP would pay in lieu of taxes on the property.

No Action Alternative: This alternative could allow increased residential subdivision in the future. Development would alter tax bases, increase traffic on roads and expand needs for utilities and other services.

Garrity Mtn:

Impact of Proposed Action: The proposed action would not affect local or state tax bases or revenues, nor existing utility systems and energy consumption.

No Action Alternative: This alternative could allow increased residential subdivision in the future. Development would alter tax bases, increase traffic on roads and expand needs for utilities and other services.

6. Aesthetics/Recreation**Clear Creek:**

Impact of Proposed Action: The proposed action would perpetuate the existing aesthetic and recreational qualities of the property. It would maintain public recreational opportunities into the future.

No Action Alternative: Potential subdivision or increased agricultural use could reduce the aesthetic and recreational quality of the area.

Garrity Mtn:

Impact of Proposed Action: The proposed action would perpetuate the existing aesthetic and recreational qualities of the property. Short-term aesthetic values could be impacted by the timber harvest. It would maintain public recreational opportunities into the future.

No Action Alternative: Potential subdivision or increased agricultural use could reduce the aesthetic and recreational quality of the area.

7. Cultural/Historic**Clear Creek**

Impact of Proposed Action: There would be no known impact. While no cultural survey has been conducted, there are no known cultural or historic sites on the property. However, under ownership by FWP, any development would trigger a cultural survey and compliance with the State Historic Preservation Act. Appropriate state and federal laws would protect any discovered sites.

No Action Alternative: There would be no known impact.

Garrity Mtn:

Impact of Proposed Action: There would be no known impact. While no cultural survey has been conducted, There are no known cultural or historic sites on the property. However, under ownership by FWP, any development would trigger a cultural survey and compliance with the State Historic Preservation Act. Appropriate state and federal laws would protect any discovered sites.

No Action Alternative: There would be no known impact.

8. Administrative/Management costs

Under the guidelines of the NRD Program, funding for operations or maintenance from the Upper Clark Fork River Basin Trust is unlikely. Operation and Maintenance costs would have to be borne by the FWP's normal operating budgets. The RMEF has committed to raise between a \$50,000 and \$100,000 fund through donations to be used by the FWP for operation and maintenance costs associated with this acquisition. The fund would be administered by the RMEF. The FWP would be able to draw against this fund until depleted.

Clear Creek

Impact of Proposed Action: The cost of administering this parcel would be minimal as regards the property itself. At this time, the legal status regarding administrative or public access to the property by means of the Clear Creek road is still in question. Subdivision covenants may incur road maintenance costs to the FWP if administrative and/or public access is pursued.

No Action Alternative: No cost.

Garrity Mtn:

Impact of Proposed Action: Considerable cost to the FWP will occur once timber harvesting is completed. This would include boundary fencing, road maintenance, gates for road management purposes and closing of spur roads to motorized vehicles, additional reseeding costs of closed roads, enforcement costs associated with regulations, etc.

No Action Alternative: No cost.

IX. Evaluation of Significance

The proposed action should have no cumulative negative effect. However, there would be positive cumulative affects for wildlife, recreation and open space.

X. Evaluation For Need For an EIS

Based on the above assessment, which has not identified any significant negative impacts from the proposed action, an EIS is not required and an EA is the appropriate level of review. The over-all impact from the successful completion of the proposed action would provide long-term benefits to both the physical and human environment.

XI. Public Involvement

Public review of the proposal has been conducted through the Natural Resource Damage Program. The RMEF grant application has been available for public review at local public libraries.

Public comment on the Draft Pilot Year 2000 UCFRB Restoration Work Plan:
Sept 9- October 10, 2000.

Public hearings on the NRDP proposals were held:

Butte: Sept. 26th, 2000

Missoula: Oct 3rd, 2000

The Citizens Advisory Council has reviewed and submitted its recommendations to the Governor's Trustee Council.

A public hearing will be conducted on this document:

Nov. 16th, 2000

Metcalf Center, 115 E Pennsylvania, Anaconda, Mt

7:00 p.m.

The public comment period will Nov. 1st – Nov. 30th, 2000

Comments on this proposal should be addressed to:

Dan Hook, FWP

13 Mtn. View

Anaconda, MT. 59711

dhookfwp@aol.com

XII. EA Preparation

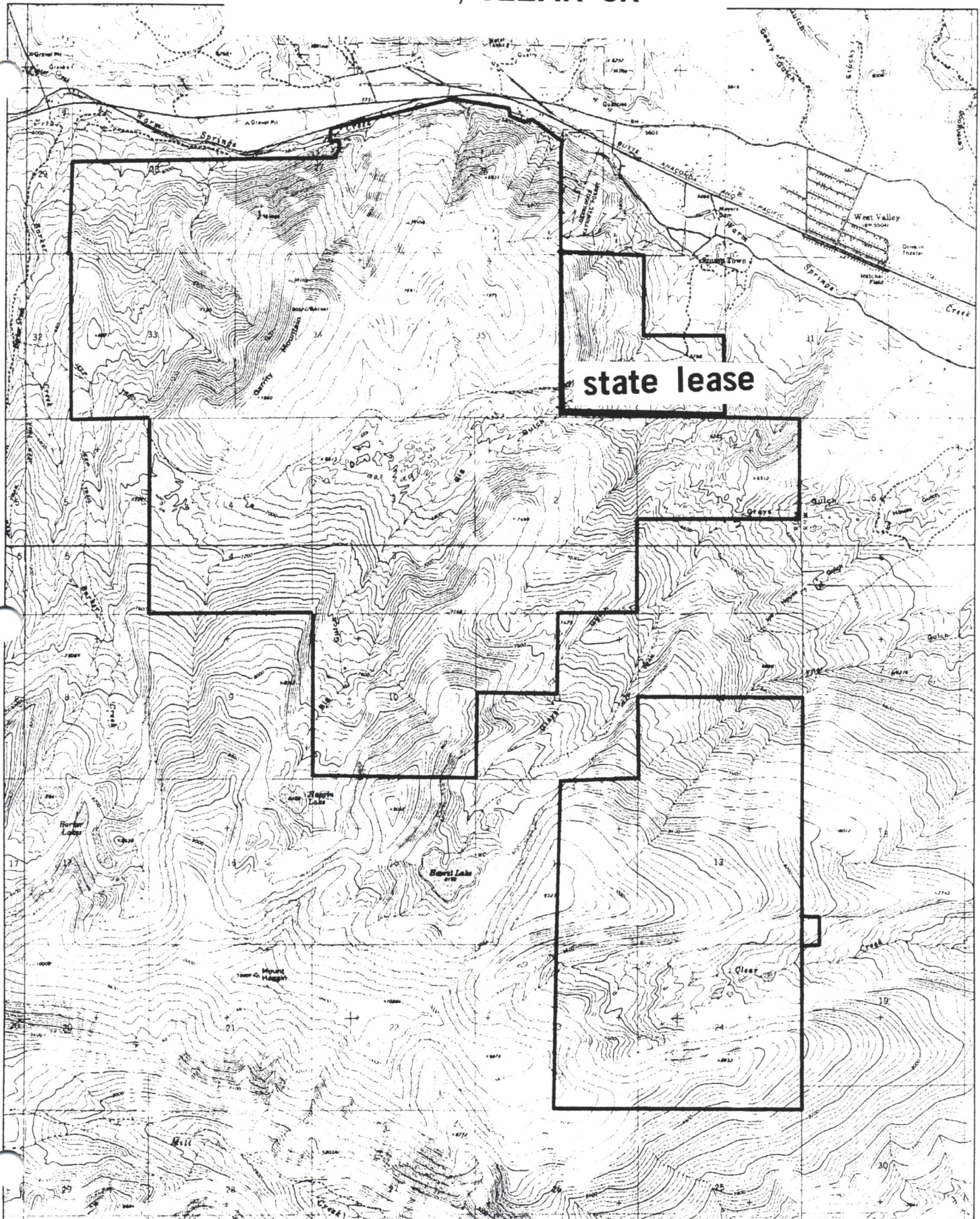
The EA was prepared by: Dan Hook, FWP

Review by: John Firebaugh FWP, Paul Sihler FWP, Carol Fox NRDP and Rob Collins NRDP.

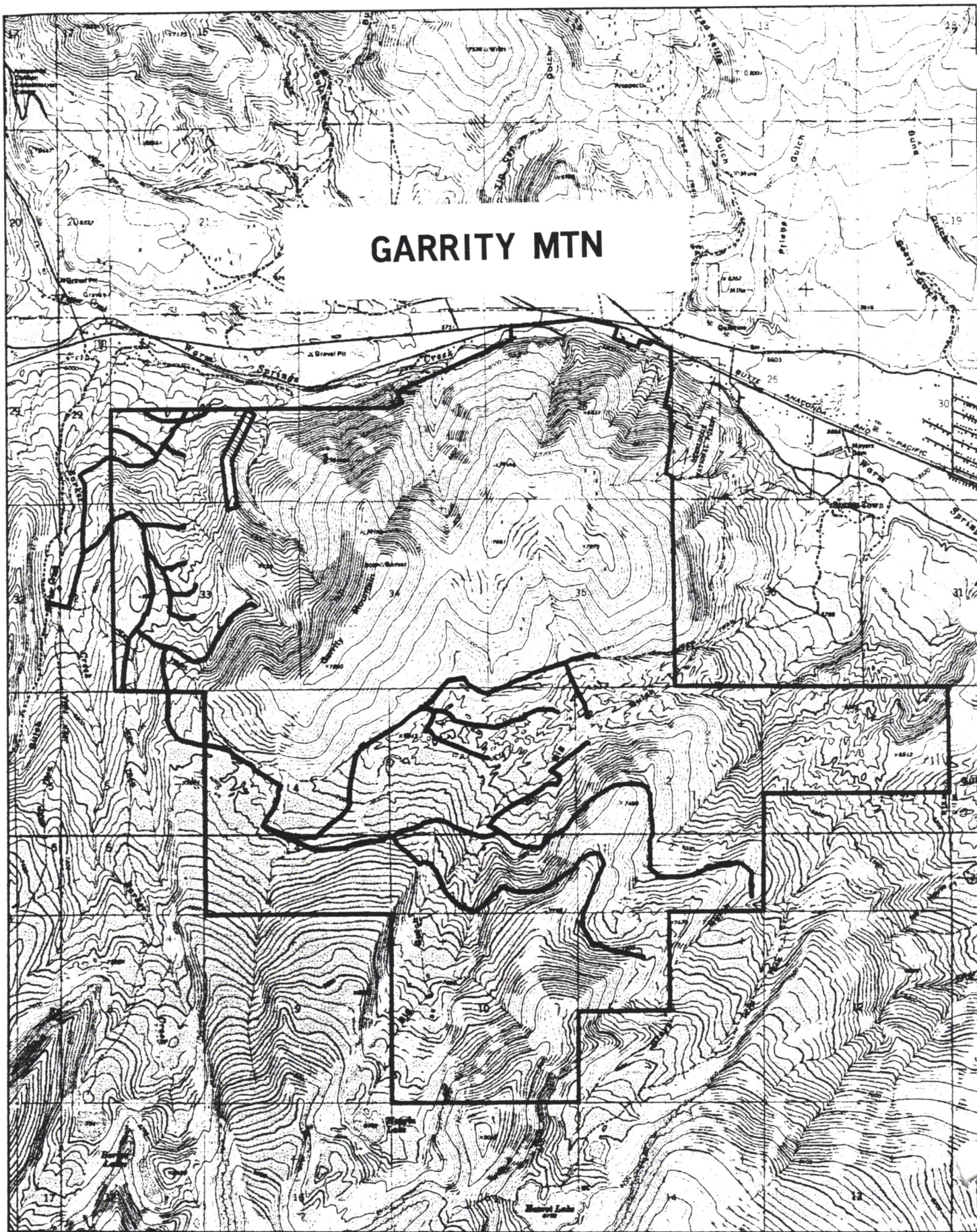
XIII. References

Pre-Draft Pilot Year 2000 Upper Clark Fork River Basin Restoration Work Plan
Project Criteria, Evaluations, and Comparisons
Natural Resource Damage Program;
1301 East Lockey
Box 201425
Helena, Mt 59620-1425.

GARRITY/CLEAR CK



ROAD SYSTEM



APPENDIX TABLE 1

Garrity Mnt/Clear Creek Lands in RMEF/NRDP Proposed for Acquisition

Garrity Mtn			Clear Creek				
Sections		Acreage	Sections		Acreage		
1	T4N R12W	441	12	T4N R12W	323	GARRITY	6705
2	T4N R12W	761	13	T4N R12W	645	CLEAR CK	2264
3	T4N R12W	760	14	T4N R12W	320	TOTAL	8969
4	T4N R12W	761	23	T4N R12W	320		
10	T4N R12W	640	24	T4N R12W	636		
11	T4N R12W	160	19	T4N R11W	20		
26	T5N R12W	559	TOTAL		2264		
27	T5N R12W	391					
28	T5N R12W	308					
33	T5N R12W	644					
34	T5N R12W	640					
35	T5N R12W	640					
TOTAL		6705					

APPENDIX TABLE 2			
SECTION	BOARD FEET	HARVEST METHOD	MILES ROAD
SECT 1 T4N R12W	155,000	COM THIN; CLEARCUT WITH ISLANDS	1.6
SECT 2 T4N R12W	168,000	COM. THIN; POCKET CLEARCUTS	2.6
SECT 3 T4N R12W	1,390,000	COM. THIN; POCKET CLEARCUTS	4.4
SECT 4 T4N R12W	280,000	COM. THIN; POCKET CLEARCUTS	2.7
SECT 10 T4N R12W	500,000	OVERSTORY REMOVAL	0.08
SECT 11 T4N R12W	40,000	OVERSTORY REMOVAL	0.6
SECT 26 T5N R12W	*528,000	OVERSTORY REMOVAL	0
SECT 27 T5N R12W	*366,000	OVERSTORY REMOVAL	0
SECT 28 T5N R12W	360,000	COM. THIN; POCKET CLEARCUTS	1.2
SECT 33 T5N R12W	880,000	COM. THIN; POCKET CLEARCUTS	3.1
SECT 34 T5N R12W	180,000	COM. THIN	0.3
	3,953,000		16.58
	TO 4,847,000		
*STATUS OF HARVEST IN SECT 26 & 27 UNKNOWN			

DRAFT 9/19/00

PRELIMINARY
Management Plan Outline
For the Proposed
Garrity Mountain Wildlife Management Area

PREFACE

The acquisition of the Garrity Mountain WMA is predicated on a purchase agreement between the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and YT Timber. Proposed funding would come through the Natural Resource Damage Program, ultimately relying on the Governor's decision. At this point, the Department FWP does not know the level of funding that will or may be approved or if and when the title transfer would be completed or the exact acreage involved. Under the RMEF/YT purchase agreement, YT Timber will remove 5 million board feet of timber from the proposed acquisition in the next four years. Timber harvest and road construction is at YT Timbers discretion with RMEF review.

FWP does not know at this time the condition the property will be in following the removal of 5 MBF of timber or the location or extent of road construction. Until those factors are known, a detailed habitat management plan and travel plan is impractical.

The following outline gives general direction for similar FWP Management Areas across Montana, with consideration given to any anticipated unusual circumstances at Garrity Mountain.

Once fee title is transferred to FWP and the acreage and condition of the property can be determined, a thorough baseline inventory would need to be completed and detailed Management Plan prepared.

GOAL

Manage for productive, diverse vegetation communities that will provide high-quality forage and cover for native wildlife species, with an emphasis on elk, mule deer and bighorn sheep winter/spring forage supplies. Provide hunting and other recreational opportunities for the public, to the extent compatible with maintenance and enhancement of wildlife habitat.

OBJECTIVES

1. Prevent soil erosion.
2. Maintain natural processes in native plant and animal communities.
3. Control the spread of noxious weeds, eradicating spot infestations wherever practical.
4. Enhance natural forage quantity and quality for wintering big game species.
5. Maintain or enhance forested cover used by big game species in hunting season and winter.
6. Enhance wildlife diversity, with emphasis on riparian and aspen communities.
7. Prevent human disturbance to elk, deer, and bighorn during the critical winter and spring seasons.
8. Work cooperatively with neighboring landowners and other affected by management actions on Garrity Mountain WMA.
9. Encourage dispersed recreation by the public in summer and fall, with hunting being the featured form of recreation during open hunting seasons.
10. Encourage and coordinate hands-on community involvement in education programs, property maintenance, habitat management and research.

STRATEGIES

1. Allow public access on the property from May 15-December 1 annually.
2. Prohibit all but authorized administrative access from December 2-May 14 annually.
3. Restrict motorized vehicles to designated open roads only.
4. Allow camping and wood gathering for campfires on the property, but prohibit firewood to be hauled from the premises. Camping limited to no more than 14 days in any 30-day period.
5. Prohibit all commercial uses of the property.
6. Inventory plant and animal communities, and prepare baseline maps.
7. Establish photo points and monitoring transects to document habitat trends over time.
8. Survey the land for new noxious weed occurrences annually, and eradicate if possible, with priority placed on roadsides, trails, and other disturbance areas.
9. Apply herbicides, biological control agents and other means of noxious weed control annually or periodically as necessary.
10. Evaluate opportunities to further wildlife habitat objectives through prescribed vegetation treatments using livestock, fire, logging and/or other appropriate means.
11. Conduct aerial and/or ground-based surveys of wintering elk, mule deer, bighorn and other wildlife on the property annually.
12. Build or repair boundary fences and access points as needed and provide signage.
13. Develop detailed management plan with public involvement; prepare regulations, brochures and maps for use by the public.